Grazing and Pasture Lands

CASE STUDY

The Trigg family, which operates a 52,000-acre ranch in northeastern New Mexico, understands that good grazingland management benefits more than just livestock production, and they have been implementing these systems for almost 15 years. In 2002, they implemented a grazing management program intended to correct decades of overgrazing, shrub increase, and soil erosion. With financial and technical assistance from NRCS New Mexico staff, the Triggs installed new water developments and fencing to improve livestock distribution and allow for better herd management. Implementing techniques they learned in a Holistic Resource Management short-course, they also implemented a thorough and meticulous monitoring and recordkeeping system. Through stocking rate adjustments and changes in herd management, the Triggs documented increases in vegetation cover and in livestock performance.

Like any good business managers, the Triggs were also interested in finding new sources of income from their land. Generating and selling carbon offsets from rangeland management provided this opportunity. Through practices that they implemented from 2010 to 2015, the Triggs and several of their neighbors were able to sequester more than 100,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide, or the equivalent of removing more than 20,000 cars from the road for 1 year. The Triggs sold the offsets for more than $100,000, and they were able to reinvest almost 90 percent of that in improving their operation. The Triggs then creatively leveraged their income with the NRCS Environmental Quality Improvement Program (EQIP) to install a variety of conservation practices that furthered their management goals for the ranch.

The Triggs and their New Mexico neighbors were successful in improving their land health, enhancing their income, and contributing to GHG reductions because they had a comprehensive ranch management plan, and they were creative and bold enough to take advantage of new opportunities.

Rotational grazing in New Mexico. Photo courtesy of USDA NRCS.